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University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "Montanans divided on highway speed limits, UM poll shows" (1996). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 14512.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/newsreleases/14512>

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NEWS RELEASE

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Dec. 18, 1996

MONTANANS DIVIDED ON HIGHWAY SPEED LIMITS, UM POLL SHOWS

MISSOULA --

Should Montana have a posted speed limit? Montanans are divided on the issue, depending on where they live and how old they are, according to the latest Montana Poll conducted by The University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

Of the 414 Montanans polled statewide, about 53 percent want a posted speed limit, while about 43 percent favor retaining the basic rule now in effect for reasonable and prudent speed limits, according to BBER Director Paul Polzin. The poll showed that 4 percent are undecided, Polzin said.

"Looking beyond the statewide averages, we see differences between the wide-open rural areas and the state's largest communities," Polzin said. City slickers favor a posted limit by a ratio of almost two- to-one, while rural residents are evenly split between maintaining the basic rule and a posted speed limit, he said.

Age also influences attitudes toward a posted speed limit, the poll found. Those 18 to 24 years old overwhelmingly favor the basic rule, while those 65 years and older are just as adamant in preferring a posted speed limit, Polzin said. Those in the middle -- 25 to 64 years old -- are evenly split.

Montanans who favored a posted speed limit were asked to name what it should be. The figure mentioned most frequently was 75 miles per hour for interstates and 55 and 65 miles per hour for rural two-lane highways, Polzin said.

The Montana Poll is a statewide telephone survey conducted by the UM Bureau of Business and Economic Research. The respondents are chosen randomly and represent a cross section of Montana adults. This Montana Poll was conducted Dec. 12-16, 1996. There were 414 respondents, yielding an error margin of plus or minus 5 percentage points for the entire sample.

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Contact: Paul Polzin, (406) 243-5113

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